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Ford letter to Moscow revealed

Washington (AP) — President Ford sent a personal appeal to Leonid I. Brezhnev urging that the Soviet Union curtail its microwave bombardment of the United States Embassy in Moscow, according to Senator Robert Dole (R., Kan.). Senator Dole said he was one of the President's letter in a closed-door briefing on Moscow radiation problem. Helmut Sonnenfeldt, one of the closest associates of Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State.

Following the Ford letter, U.S. diplomatic efforts to test the radiation, as well as embassy staff meeting that to widespread publicity, the Russians reduced the microwave-power levels. However, they have refused to cease the bombardment completely.

A White House spokesman, Ron G. Carlson, said there have been U.S.-Soviet contacts on the radiation issue at various levels, and "there has been communication — correspondence — between the President and Mr. Brezhnev." He declined to give further details.

The radiation problem has caused concern among current and former American personnel at the Moscow Embassy about long-term exposure to the low-level microwaves might result in adverse health or behavioral effects.

Senator Dole, who had criticized U.S. handling of the microwave affair, said in an interview that Mr. Sonnenfeldt apparently mentioned the Ford letter—dispatched about seven months ago—to impress upon the senator that "we weren't taking this lightly."

He said he was not told the specific wording of the letter or what, if any, response there was from Mr. Brezhnev.

Disclosure of the Ford-Brezhnev letter marks the first confirmation that the embassy radiation question has been considered serious enough to require personal attention at the highest level of U.S.-Soviet relations.

An aide to Senator Dole who was present during the senator's closed-door briefing with Mr. Sonnenfeldt said the Ford letter to Mr. Brezhnev evidently had been sent in December, 1975, or January of this year.

The aide, Claude Alexander, said Mr. Sonnenfeldt explained that President Ford "had written a personal letter to Brezhnev to make a personal appeal that these [U.S. Embassy personnel being irradiated in Moscow] are our employees—in effect, 'What the hell are you trying to do?'"

According to a classified State Department document made available to the Associated Press, U.S. concern over the Soviet microwaves—first detected in the early 1960's—increased in October, 1975, when the radiation began focusing on the embassy from two different directions.

From October through January, the document said, the United States was "making representations" to the Soviet government while preparing to install protective screens on the building's windows. Embassy employees were finally briefed about the radiation in early February.

The Sonnenfeldt briefing and

the White House spokesman's comments left unclear whether Mr. Ford's initial letter to Mr. Brezhnev was followed up by further high-level exchanges.

The State Department has denied that any U.S. concessions were made in return for reducing of the radiation by the Soviet Union. "There is no question of a concession," a department spokesman, Robert Funseth, told reporters earlier this month.

Knowledgeable U.S. sources say the searchlight-like Soviet microwave beams are intended to foil American electronic

snooping devices on the roof of the 10-story embassy.

Over the 15-year history of the radiation problem—while its existence was a tightly held secret—the issue reportedly was raised by staff officials during the 1967 Glassboro (N.J.) summit meeting between President Lyndon B. Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexei N. Kosygin.

During recent months, the State Department has said the microwave situation figured in discussions between Mr. Kissinger and Anatoly A. Dobrynin, Soviet ambassador to Washington.